

Book Two

OF THE COLLECTIVE SORROWS

SLATE TWO

(THE TALES OF SHOCKLEY AND THEXORY)

BY SHAUNA SOLAMAN

PART A

It was of no true consequence how or why Shockley and Thexory met and most certainly Sherlock could attest to this assertion. However if you have chosen to remain unsatisfied by this then I suppose I'll be coerced into killing the mystery.

PART B

Beyond the gilded gates, one could vaguely see the silhouette of Shockley on that day. The black and blue skies danced with the puffy gray clouds whilst painting the sky purple; all of which, though lovely in theory had cast a darkness that created a subdued blue effect. As the waves crashed upon the beach, dragging in the travelers that were adrift, there was Shockley greeting them beneath her feet. One could not help but notice Shockley's lovingly stare into the one thing that could devour her whole. Before it she stood without reprise, completely composed whilst it consumed her entirety – almost, dare I say – within a blink of the eye.

PART C

Thexory as a child, was a lovely boy, and certainly it goes without saying that he grew be a wonderful man. But neither you nor I would be able to confirm that being that Thexory has an inclination to reclusiveness and shyness. Nonetheless a glimpse could be caught if one heeded the shadows and then they too would find the intriguing man dressed in black. It is that same man who dragged the stars out of the sky so that he could cast them adrift upon the open canvas of the world.

PART D

A black kite that slowly rose and certainly soared through the sky had broken the concentration of all those around and set the galaxies in motion. The haunting question attacked the onlookers with certainly a good cause even if you would not say so yourself. But, my dear reader, I believe I might have led you astray. After all, what would a beach scene involving Shockley and a passing kite having anything to do with Thexory? The kind gentleman who could barely tear himself away from the conservatory (or was it a laboratory?) that he loved so dearly? Perhaps the kite truly belonged to none other than our beloved Thex. Alas there are no special meetings or tragedies at hand just yet. Certainly without dispute it could be proven that Thex was at the gates, but no, I must tell you this.

PART E

A series of black and indigo grasshoppers had supposedly perched themselves upon a syringa komarowii (this has not been verified) which were placed nearby the entrance. Beyond the bushes, you would have seen the clear figure of Thex as he silently moved about. Thexory noticed the spectacle but It was of no concern of his. Thus, slightly amused with a bit of intrigue, he turned away with the utmost agility. Shockley, off in the distance, with the vision of shooting stars had not noticed the onlooker, but suffice to say, she had noticed no one at all. One at this point should assume that this is when they were

intended to meet and not when they had.

PART F

Shockley drew Thexory near as she began to make herself clear. With each new revelation it was Shockley who feared and only with his permission did she continue. There were no mysteries meant to be kept, no sad tales or miseries to protect. Underneath it all was nothing, except what is, the fear of herself. To each person who has seen the masked figures unkempt, "there is nothing" that needs to be recant. "And if you should see me for all that I am, will you understand, Thex, that I have done this because I am crumbling beneath myself." The dark waste lands will come to claim the crumbling Shockley that Sherlock tried to save. "I answer to the sky and yet even that I have disappoint but you I will not," or so she'd exclaim.

And anyone who had ever known –

PART G

On their first date, Thexory (who was quite knowledgeable about things that mattered) and Shockley (who was well versed in things that did not) decided that the perfect outlet for their intended excursion would be none other than the beach. For it was Thex who knew exactly when they had first crossed all whilst Shockley was oblivious to all with the exception of the lovely lilacs he had proudly procured from –

It was not long before Shockley, beside herself, returned the lovely lilacs to the place that they belonged and nurtured the seeds that were planted. It was not noted that Shockley wore red lipstick on that day.

PART H

As Thexory walked away he wondered why the sky was so gray. He ventured away to commence his own journey to the netherworld where they all play. An anxious child, he always was, he drew on the skies and dragged them nearby casting them adrift. "What ghosts have you?" he bellowed but alas nevermore could he be heard.

PART I

"Crown the prince after you move the rook but watch for the pawns that were slaughtered before. Remember that I am the Queen of this game," was etched on the glass. "A knight of dark and one of light shall remain in stalemate till the board is set free." Off the pieces went, into the sea.

PART J

A gift of appreciation and yet something more. As Thexory fiddled with his favorite item and marveled over the minute intricacies, he wondered about the theories in mind. Amongst the many inquiries sustained (for you will recall, Thex was always quite the bright boy; clandestine and cleverly composed, he rarely did what he was told), he wondered about his name. When Thex finally lifted his head, it was much to his own despair that Shockley had been carried off in a crowd. Although he had searched with great effort, he resolved to himself that she was never to be found.

Under a darkened sky, he once thought he had seen her to which he said to himself, "The gift of memory will always remain."

PART K

Although he had inquired a remarkable taste for keeping himself well concealed, little did Thexory know that no matter where he was or what he did, he shone brightly than the rest in ways he could never imagine. It was but once that this truth was ever revealed, and from a most unlikely source.

PART L

Beyond the hills and passed the fields it was only once that Thexory found the silver and purple gardens that were hidden under the shades of blue. Within there he found the hidden secret of Shockley's and Sherlock's family treasure: a delicate purple flower poisoned from stem to petal, epidermis and cuticle included. Now he too knew how to handle such extravagant beauties that were only tempted to betray.

PART M

Upon the beige parchment, with freckles of gold, Thexory read the beautiful calligraphy done in red aloud. "To the west of where you once were, the goddess along with her companion white dog protects the igneous layers whilst the waters that cradle it are watched from beneath. Either way that you've heard the tale, they are beckoning you and soon it will be time to heed."

Thex examined the wax seal that remained intact only to find a familiar family crest embedded into it. With no return address, he returned the letter to the ravens who gladly accepted the invitation without recourse.

PART N

With all that in mind, Thexory remembered one thing that would always remain true. Should he call, she would listen and should he play, she will stop. And he knew that this would remain forever true as he gazed in the mirror, lighting each candle with such fervor that one would assume a greater task was at hand. It was the first time that he had ever seen himself shine so brightly.

Muttering quietly to his reflection he simply said, "If you remember to say 'dear,' she'll know that

everything is alright.”

PART O

On a bright summer's day, Thexory, whom which had been taken with his studies found a momentary distraction when he looked out the window. At that very moment as his eyes graced the panes, both a cyanocitta cristata and a cardinalis cardinalis stopped by for a chat. His weary little travelers declined his offerings and instead said that they would wait for the next train. Thex found this to be slightly perturbing but no matter how much he questioned, they refused to speak of the matter. Upon their request, he took up his book and began to teach.

“It's simple really --” half way through his prose, the visitors pardoned themselves and bid him farewell. As he looked to the sky a lofty red balloon came floating by. Nestled within the basket was a familiar face to whom which he said, “Good day Rex, safe travels to you.”

PART P

Always a bit shy, when the day became night, she would put on a vinyl and then proceed to dance. Accustomed to being alone she was startled to find him there staring back at her. With a grin, she kindly continued pay no attention to her audience of one. Without further ado, he took ahold of her and gently removed the headphones – after all, they were his.

PART Q

The glittery jewels of the rivers had brighten the land for miles abound. Lavish yards of reds and orange stretched before the eyes as one could relish in the luscious lands. It was an elephant that once brought Thex here, with his bright onyx eyes and long curving tusks. When Thex arrived, he could hardly believe his eyes – a whole new world lay before him. As th sparkling liquid rushed downstream, Thex could not help but see the beautiful emeralds that shone beneath. He looked to the elephant who gave him a slight bow and told him to proceed. Thexory continued towards the emeralds and noticed a face that gaily smiled back. As he sunk below the nymphs cradled him dearly and if it were not for his companion they would have taken his soul.

As he returned the sirens beckoned but the elephant defended his dear friend. “Take all you want, but he you cannot have.” Beside themselves, the sirens took the jewels from the land and return them to the sky. Given back to the palace, Thex heard the elephant say, “You I will see, at the end of the world.”

PART R

It was only once that Shockley grabbed Thexory and pointed feverishly to the sky. “Pay close attention! No matter where you are and regardless of what you're doing, you are always connected to everything.” He looked her astonished with the simple reply, “I know.” She grinned that of a Cheshire's grin and said, “Sure you know, everyone knows, but do you feel it?” “Of course,” he replied nonchalantly. “Well

then you know that you're stuck with me for the rest of your life then?" "That doesn't make any sense." "Sure it does! Wait till I write a book."

PART S

"Would you venture to the underworld?" Shockley once asked her companion at random. Thexory put down his violin and replied thoughtfully, "I have been there before." "What were you searching for?" "Regretfully I cannot tell you that I was searching for anything. Rather I had gone to see Osiris and ask him a question regarding my fate." "You don't believe in destiny though." With a smirk, he took up his instrument and said, "So it seems."

PART T

Once while Thexory slept, Shockley climbed to the sky and put back all the stars that he had hastily pulled down so long ago. This time however, she painted a full moon in the colors that he liked best. On instinct she decided to give the newly decorated moon the pale halo of red so he'd be aware of what she had done. The next night when the moon visited Thex, he was slightly startled but appreciative of the gesture. Even if he had no idea what it had meant.

PART U

It was a misstep on Thexory's behalf that led him to a field of blue orchids with hints of purple and rose of black and red. As the rest of the world faded away, he wondered silently how did he get there. Retracing his steps, he could not find his way and with each new misstep executed a wave of panic washed over him.

A distance away, he could hear faint laughter and so began to make his way there. As he got closer, bubbles had floated his way till the moment occurred that one large enough took him in. Off to the skies, he drifted away carelessly, observing everything beneath. For the miles that stretched he could see nothing but a field of flowers whom mimicked the rainbow the further out it went.

Certainly not perplexed, Thexory took to bursting the bubble and found himself amongst the golden red arches of blossoms. The field of red flowers ranged in species and were graced by insects of all sorts – so attentively he walked through, unsure of where he would go. In the back of his mind, he knew that he had not seen where he had drifted in from nor where he could leave. Consequently, the only thing he thought he could do was to lie in the field and enjoy the surroundings as he stared at the creatures around him.

The laughter began faintly off in the distance, but Thex paid no mind as he began to lie – but as he did, the field changed into the vast sea and so he fell throughout the deep. It was a kind gesture the whales granted to take him above to the clouds and back through the door at the sun, to his own world.

PART V

Thexory paid no mind to the rest of the train as he put on his headphones and turned up the music. He fell asleep as the train entered the tunnel and somehow, as if by magic, he awoke just as the train began to exit it. As Thexory brought his eyes to the window he expected the darkened black walls to turn sky blue, but instead to his surprise it turned a greenish-blue color – invested with all sorts of creatures. A flock of Irukandji jellyfish were rather involved in a conversation with the stingrays while a very large red octopus hurried them along. The beautiful scenery turned black as the train entered another tunnel and closed the book on that. After shrugging his shoulders, he turned up the volume and omitted a sigh. When the bright lights interrupted Thexory, he shielded his eyes and off in the corner he could see Shockley. A thousand times different then when he had seen her last, he rushed over to greet her but alas the mirage vanished. (It should be dully noted that the woman that was before him wore red lipstick).

PART W

Much later on, after a significant amount of time had passed, Thexory went for a solitary walk to the end of the world. Not too close and yet not too far, a leopard joined him and they conversed along the way. “Why do you seek it?” the leopard inquired. “There's someone I need to see.” “There is nothing but Death down that path and surely that is not who you seek.” Thexory grinned, “No, I undoubtedly do not.” “Then who could it be?” “I believe I am seeking the sky.” “Then assuredly you have broken all the rules.”

“You will miss out on many journeys if you seek her there. She will answer whatever questions you may have and correct any regrets on your behalf, but to enter the netherworld is to --” “And luckily, I have none.” The leopard paused and wondered what he could ask, but nothing seemed correct for this moment. “I am not done, for I have only just begun,” Thex responded to fill the moment of silence. “What have you learned?” the leopard wondered but did not ask but instead asked a telling of all the tales that Thex neglected to mention. And so till they reached the end of the world, Thex spoke about all his adventures he had had.

PART X

In the darkest of night you would never see them, nor would you ever hear them and so you would never know they were there.

Shockley pointed off in the distance and Thexory could not understand what she was trying to tell him. With every inquiry she hushed him and said, “Wait.” Nearly frustrated, though not entirely just yet, he could not grasp what she was waiting for. A cloaked figure in black came up to them with an empty glass lantern and beckoned Shockley with it. As he raised the lantern to her level she quickly blew into it. With her breath, a small flame appeared and both she and the light bearer looked off to the distance.

Thex looked at the lantern first and the small flame gave rise to thousands upon thousands of fireflies that headed off ahead. Finally he saw what she was pointing to: a parade of some sort to celebrate all the light.

PART Y

Once the music started up, Shockley's attention was taken away but nonetheless Thexory tried to regain her attention. Finally she excused herself and walked away. Slowly the eyes followed her only to see the frozen walls close in around her. Shockley seemed to pay no attention even losing track of what she was doing or even where she had gone and instead succumbed to the environment that draped around her.

Slowly she strolled into the village while the snow fell all around and with eager eyes did her onlookers outside attempt to solve what had just occurred. All bundled up, the villagers and she went about their chores with such gaiety one could not help but admire their valor. Just as panic settled in on the party, Shockley appeared as if nothing had occurred.

PART Z

Thexory thought he had seen Shockley once but no longer did she appear the same. It was not till long after when he had not thought of the chance encounter that it struck him that he had not seen her at all. It was conceivable that he had merely seen her ghost or that his need finally enveloped his desire. Nonetheless he had chosen to set a trap by setting up a chair near the door. If she should like to rest for a just a bit, then she would find the comfort of a chair. Without dispute you could agree that one who moves with the winds should appreciate such a gesture.

But it was late that night and his surprise guests led him away. It is questionable whether or not Shockley actually came, but I personally would like to believe that she did. Never you mind the black roses at the bay.

EPILOGUE

A lone black kite flew across the sky and if you traced it back, you'd see Thexory there (yes, I lied). The black kite fell near Shockley and as she returned it, she quietly whispered, "Go west. Your time is running out."

SHAUNA SOLAMAN